



# Washington's **WILD**Future

## FISHING



## Improving Washington's Fisheries

In 2015, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) asked people throughout the state to share their thoughts on what the department is doing right and where it can improve in the coming years. Thousands of people responded to WDFW's Wild Future initiative, commenting on issues ranging from the complexity of our fishing rules to the desire for more recreational and commercial fishing opportunities.

Based on input received from thousands of people across the state, WDFW has developed proposals regarding management of Washington's fish populations and the recreational and commercial fisheries they support.

## Maintaining and Expanding Fisheries

Numerous sport and commercial fisheries – such as those for salmon, halibut and coastal rockfish – are managed under catch quotas or guidelines. Federal permits also are required to provide fishing opportunities in marine and fresh water areas where there are threatened or endangered fish species.

Significant monitoring, sampling and analysis is necessary to ensure fisheries stay within catch quotas and protected species are not harmed.

To continue to meet these requirements, WDFW is proposing to increase monitoring and sampling efforts, as well as add technical staff to help manage fisheries. Those proposals include:

- **Monitoring and evaluating** fish populations and fisheries in the Columbia River and tributaries, ocean and



coastal waters, and Puget Sound. (\$6.5 million General Fund-State and Wildlife Account-State)

- **Negotiating and implementing** management plans for Columbia River and Puget Sound fisheries. (\$597,000 GF-S and WL-S)
- **Renewing an endorsement** required to fish for salmon and steelhead in the Columbia River. (\$3.3 million in endorsement revenue)
- **Maintaining hatchery production** in the lower Columbia River. (\$1.3 million GF-S and WL-S)
- **Enforcing laws designed to protect fish and wildlife**, including efforts to suppress a growing black market for seafood that threatens the sustainability of the resource and the health and safety of consumers. (\$442,000 GF-S, FY 17-19; \$442,000 GF-S in FY 19-21 and FY 21-23)

## Protecting Habitat

Without sufficient spawning and rearing habitat to sustain fish populations, many fisheries simply would not be available. Maintaining and enhancing fishing opportunities requires WDFW to bolster its ability to protect fish habitat, including work to:

- **Complete an inventory of high-priority fish passage barriers** in western Washington and develop a systematic plan for correcting them. (\$600,000 GF-S, FY 17-19; \$600,000 GF-S, FY 19-21)
- **Restore critical fish habitat** by providing additional support for Regional Fisheries Enhancement Groups, the network of citizen volunteers who help conduct restoration projects in partnership with counties, cities and tribes around the state. (\$1.4 million WL-S)
- **Recover steelhead populations**, including efforts to determine the causes of poor juvenile steelhead survival in Puget Sound. (\$930,000 GF-S and other source FY 17-19; \$382,000 GF-S, FY 19-21)
- **Protect critical fish habitat** by increasing technical assistance to shoreline landowners working on projects permitted under an Hydraulic Project Approval (HPA) and boosting enforcement to ensure that everyone required to obtain an HPA does so and follows the permit conditions when working around shorelines. (\$3.4 million GF-S, WL-S and other source)
- **Monitor and study** predation of chinook and sockeye in Lake Washington (\$287,000 WL-S); and monitor salmon and steelhead populations in several other areas. (\$473,000 GF-S and WL-S)

## Developing New Fishing Opportunities

Anglers also expressed a desire for new salmon and steelhead fisheries, which WDFW is currently working to develop. The department is proposing to seek additional funding for:

- **Skagit River and Baker Lake fisheries** – Adding a new recreational catch-and-release fishery for steelhead returning to the Skagit River, and expanding the recreational sockeye fishery in the river and at Baker Lake. (\$625,000 GF-S)
- **Puget Sound and coastal hatchery fish** – Increasing hatchery production of salmon and steelhead in Puget Sound and coastal facilities to improve fishing opportunities for the recreational and commercial fleets. (\$2.4 million GF-S and WL-S)
- **Lower Columbia River salmon** – Increasing monitoring efforts to allow for more opportunities to fish for salmon and steelhead on lower Columbia River. (\$1.7 million GF-S and WL-S)

- **Hood Canal salmon** – Developing a hatchery fall chinook fishery in Hood Canal. (\$116,000 GF-S)
- **Grays Harbor and Willapa Bay salmon** – Improving escapement estimates and catch accounting to allow for more fishing opportunities. (\$680,000 GF-S and WL-S)
- **Orderly fisheries** – Key to providing fishing opportunities is enforcement of laws – such as catch limits and gear restrictions – designed to protect fish and wildlife and their habitat. Proposed new opportunities would require additional enforcement to protect public safety and the resource. (\$600,000 GF-S and WL-S)

## Maintaining Hatcheries

Washington has invested millions of dollars to build and operate the state's 82 fish hatcheries, which are valued at more than \$1.5 billion. But the state spends less than \$500,000 annually to maintain them.

This lack of maintenance has resulted in costly emergency repairs, failing infrastructure, increased safety risks, and reduced fish production. The department is proposing to seek additional funds to:

- **Maintain the state's facilities** and continue producing hatchery fish – the main driver in many of Washington's fisheries. (\$2.7 million GF-S and WL-S)

## Simplifying Regulations and Enhancing Outreach

Anglers and others expressed a desire for the department to simplify fishing rules and present them more clearly. Over the years, fishing regulations in Washington have evolved into some of the most complex in the world. This is a result of numerous factors, particularly the challenge of managing waters where there are a variety of fish species, some of which are harvestable while others are protected.

These complicated fishing regulations not only prove difficult for some seasoned anglers, but are also largely viewed as an obstacle for people considering the sport. To help address this issue, WDFW is working to simplify recreational fishing rules and improve the readability of the regulations pamphlet. Meanwhile, the department also is proposing to seek additional funds to:

- **Continue development of a mobile application** for fishing regulations that will allow anglers to quickly determine the current rules for a particular body of water. The GPS-enabled application would also feature a real-time notification of emergency changes to fishing rules. (\$658,000 WL-S)
- **Expand outreach and education efforts** to help get youth interested in the sport of fishing. (\$115,000 WL-S)